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Abstract of the national paper of South Africa

1. The South African national paper outlines the keen interest of the Government of South Africa in space technology and the opportunity it presents for socio-economic development. South African space research and technology has in the past, and will in future, empower the country to become a stronger competitor in and contributor to the international arena of space activities. It is in this context that South Africa commits itself to be part of the global trend in the utilization of space applications for the benefit of its people and those in neighbouring countries.

2. In view of its relatively late entry into some areas of space activity, South Africa has committed itself to a set of initiatives aimed at facilitating steady progress towards achieving a knowledge-based society. Those initiatives are aimed at achieving near- and long-term goals that focus on growth, job creation, universal service, education, democracy and globalization.

3. South Africa intends to formulate a policy and legal framework that will make space science and technology activities part of the progressive development of international space activities. The objectives of the entire exercise will be related especially to areas that will be broadly beneficial to industry and society. Those objectives are:

(a) To maximize the utilization of remote sensing and other applications so that the economic benefits to society will increase remarkably;

(b) To utilize fully the possibilities of space activities in selected areas of fundamental space research;

(c) To promote the commercial exploitation of space technology;

(d) To improve space-related education and training.

4. There is no doubt that the demand for satellite applications in South Africa will grow dramatically well into the next millennium. The basic space applications, broadcasting and telecommunications in particular, will continue to play the most important role in the provision of services, especially to the under-served, rural areas of the country. New developments that will make the provision of telecommunications to those areas more affordable are eagerly awaited. The demand could be met to a large extent by satellite communications, provided that the technology and volumes bring the cost of a call to within reach of the poorer communities. In order to prepare the country technologically for the expected information explosion of the twenty-first century, South Africa will align its regulatory framework to make use of all the technological advantages offered by wireless local loop and by fixed and mobile satellite services.

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